



# American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

August 14, 2011

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is writing to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to permanently assign 1-800-SUICIDE, 1-888-SUICIDE and 1-877-SUICIDA to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Since January 2005, SAMHSA has funded the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), through a cooperative agreement with Link2Health Solutions, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Mental Health Association of New York City. Since its launch, the Lifeline has routed over 2.9 million calls to 150 crisis centers in 49 states and has helped strengthen the safety net for our veterans by entering into an inter-agency agreement with SAMHSA and the Department of Veterans Affairs that allows veterans in distress to easily access help by "pressing one" when calling the Lifeline. The Lifeline has an extensive backup system consisting of regional and national backup centers, as well as a surge system, to ensure all calls are answered. Additionally, participating centers have consistent access to call volume data, as well as technical assistance, which helps ensure those who reach out for help obtain reliable and high-quality services. The success of SAMHSA and Link2Health Solutions in administering the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is evidenced, not only by the growing number of participating crisis centers and increasing call volume, but by the multiple comments on the FCC site registered by crisis centers in support of permanent assignment of the numbers to SAMHSA.

Given the concerns regarding miscommunication, confusion and technical problems expressed by the crisis centers that worked with the Kristin Brooks Hope Center (KBHC) during the time when it administered these three toll-free hotlines, as well reports of other KBHC-sponsored hotlines going out of service, we believe that returning these toll-free numbers to KBHC would pose too great a risk to the safety of those in crisis and or considering suicide.

As a foundation that supports the research and education programs needed to prevent suicide, AFSP has collaborated with the Lifeline Network extensively and has served on an external advisory committee that reviews the Lifeline's evaluation data and progress. AFSP does not offer hotline or crisis services. Therefore, the network complements AFSP's mission in a variety of ways, such as enabling AFSP chapters to link to certified local crisis centers and promoting the network in AFSP's national materials, on our website and at our national and local community educational programs and events. We have been consistently pleased with the quality of the network and with our working relationship with Link2Health Solutions.

In order to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable populations, we strongly recommend that the FCC permanently assign the three toll-free numbers in question to SAMHSA.

Sincerely,

Robert Gebbia  
Executive Director